



PRESS RELEASE

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Charity warns of risk of algae at Bittell reservoirs

The Canal & River Trust is advising visitors to Upper and Lower Bittell Reservoir to avoid unnecessary contact with the water due to a bloom of blue-green algae.

While the outbreak of the algae in summer is a natural occurrence, contact with the algae can be harmful to the skin, causing allergic reactions including itchy eyes, skin irritation and hay fever-like symptoms.

Due to the uncertainty surrounding the toxicity of the algae, the Trust is encouraging visitors to the reservoirs, their children and pets to be cautious around the water. Warning signs have been placed around the affected areas.

Blue-green algae occur naturally in many inland freshwaters. Occasionally, blue-green algae 'blooms', colouring the water green, blue-green or greenish brown and sometimes causing paint-like or jelly-like scums.

The Trust – which cares for the reservoirs and the Worcester & Birmingham Canal that they feed – is monitoring the algae levels and deciding on the most effective way of dealing with it.

Rob Eaton, Canal & River Trust customer operation manager, says: "Bittell Reservoir is a really popular spot. We want people to continue to enjoy the lovely waterside setting, but just be aware that there's a current outbreak of blue-green algae in the water.

"Blue-green algae is naturally occurring but it can be harmful to your skin. We're asking people to be extra careful and if they or their pets come into contact with the affected water, they should wash all exposed skin with clean water as soon as possible, and particularly before eating or drinking. If they are in any doubt about their welfare after contact with algae, they should seek medical advice.

"We're monitoring the levels of the algae, it will ultimately die off naturally, but we will take measures in the meantime if we feel it was posing issues for fish and other wildlife."

For more information about the Canal & River Trust visit canalrivertrust.org.uk

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Notes to editors

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The Canal & River Trust is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales, caring for the nation's third largest collection of listed structures, as well as museums, archives, and hundreds of important wildlife sites.

We believe that living waterways transform places and enrich lives and our role is to make sure there is always a place on your doorstep where you can escape the pressures of everyday life, stretch your legs and simply feel closer to nature.

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